

The Red Route network - eight years on

It is eight years since it was first proposed that Falloeden Way, Lyttelton Road and Aylmer Road be designated as part of the Red Route network.

This is a system of linked urban clearways with very restricted parking and stopping facilities. Since the stretch has been an official urban clearway since the early seventies, such designation seemed unnecessary and the proposals were strenuously resisted, but, after many false starts and delays, the red lines have appeared in Market Place and parking controls have been imposed on other parts of the road which, though not red-lined, are covered by new Clearway Regulations.

The implementation of the Red Routes is the direct responsibility of the Director of Traffic for London and his objectives are:

- to improve the movement of all traffic
- to reduce the impact of congestion
- to provide special help for buses
- to improve the local environment
- to provide better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists

These objectives are intended to be achieved without encouraging further car commuting into central London.

The Director controls all funding for work on the Red Route and any associated traffic calming. There is no financial contribution from Barnet Council, who are paid to act only as agents for the Director.

With the Red Route accepted as a fait accompli, however

inappropriate along this alignment, the RA, together with the Lorry Route Joint Action Committee and the HGS Trust, saw it as important to act to minimise the detrimental impact and obtain the maximum benefits available from these proposals. To this end the three groups, with the support of English Heritage, have met regularly with the Director and obtained, we feel, considerable concessions.

Falloeden Way will be reduced to a single traffic lane in each direction, making it safer for both drivers and pedestrians. Wide, safer pedestrian refuges will be installed at Eastholm, Midholm and Westholm junctions which will provide the added benefit of safe shelter for drivers waiting to turn right into the 'Holms'. The pedestrian link between the north and south sides of the Suburb and particularly the route to Brookland School will be much safer with a light-controlled crossing at Brookland Rise and the traffic signals from Bishops Avenue to Henly's Corner will be rephased, with all-red pedestrian periods, to ensure a more regulated flow with reduced tailbacks.

The junctions of Addison Way and Brookland Rise with Falloeden Way have been redesigned to slow vehicles turning off the main road and we are pressing LBB to take measures to prevent large vehicles damaging the new verges by cutting across the realigned kerbs.

Discussions have ensured that the environmental impact of the ugly red-lining and the intrusive signs has been kept to a minimum and the overall appearance of the road will be

enhanced by extensive tree-planting and a refurbishment of existing landscape features.

In 1994 the Director was persuaded to fund the installation of traffic calming measures in Brim Hill and Deansway (from Bishops Avenue to Brim Hill) as part of the Red Route programme, and subsequently we have been able to prevail upon him to supplement that funding with a sum to cover similar treatment of Addison Way as a route parallel to the A1 - a cause which has been ignored by Barnet Council for many years.

The RA, HGS Lorry Route JAC, HGS Trust and English Heritage are now in consultation with LBB to formulate acceptable traffic calming proposals to be submitted to the residents concerned (see separate article).

In this flurry of euphoria and self-congratulation, it would be unrealistic not to sound a note of warning.

The Red Route is not a good thing. It has no justifiable place in a planned residential community such as ours. But faced with it, we believe we have obtained the best spin-off benefits available.

Those, however, who face parking on the Red Route should be warned that the wardens who are enforcing the regulations are a different breed from the norm and residents would be well advised not to take chances on escaping penalties. As an example, these wardens were issuing 'tickets' at 11pm on Christmas Eve to cars with just a wheel over the permitted line!

TERRY RAND

Letters to the editor

Noise pollution

55 Meadway
NW11 6PP

Sir

Congratulations to David Lewis for raising the question of the intolerable noise caused by certain kinds of 'gardening'. The worst problem is the use of petrol-driven lawn mowers, hedgecutters, blowers and suckers. These are not only very noisy, but are often operated with unnecessary revving of the engines. Sometimes the Suburb sounds like the Isle of Man during the motor-bike races.

As well as the noise, these machines pollute the air with clouds of unpleasant fumes from their ill-adjusted and ill-maintained engines, while the suckers

and blowers impoverish the environment by removing or destroying insect eggs, larvae etc. and the insects themselves.

The devices are quite unnecessary. Electric tools will usually do the same job, perhaps slightly more slowly, but quite as efficiently.

We need bye-laws outlawing them, but until they can be made effective, residents can help themselves by refusing to employ gardeners who use these machines or using them ourselves.

Yours
M B McMullan

The root of the problem

3 Maurice Walk,
NW11 6JX

Sir,

In the Suburb News Summer edition an item mentioned "RA votes for more trees". Trees planted in Maurice Walk 12 - 15 years ago are now throwing up roots that are displacing paving stones. So, the result is that the council have to replace stones with ugly patches of tarmac. Why cannot slow, shallow rooting trees be planted? A mountain ash at the corner of Maurice Walk and Ossulton Way has been there for over 35 years and has no root problem!

Yours
Edna Weiss

Neighbourhood Watch

As almost every possible aspect of life has been reviewed in recent months I see no reason why Neighbourhood Watch should be the exception. Ten years ago between two and three hundred crimes of burglary and attempted burglary were reported from the Suburb every year. By the end of 1998 the figure was less than one hundred. There has been a small increase since then but we have shown that we can contain this menace. We must not relax our care in securing our homes against intruders. Also the criminals change their tactics. When homes are secure against easy entry, deception or other methods will be tried.

Vehicle crime has also been reduced but is still at a very high level. A new tactic for the theft of valuable cars has been developed to cope with the introduction of car immobilisers. Only the correct transmitter key will permit the thief to take the car, and these keys cannot be copied easily. Thieves now break into a home or steal a handbag only to get the car key. The keys are usually very easy to find, hanging on a hook or lying on a table. There have been reports of theft of keys through a letter box using a piece of stiff wire as a hook. Even use of a fishing rod has been mentioned! Be alert to any

sign of entry and check carefully that nothing has been taken.

Almost the whole of the Suburb has a Watch but there are a few gaps.

Remember that to benefit from the reduced insurance premium offered by some companies, a Watch must be in effective operation for your property.

DEREK CHANDLER

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Heath Hands

If heather (from which the Heath got its name) is re-established on Hampstead Heath, at least part of the credit can go to Heath Hands, the Heath's own newly-established volunteer corps. If more bramble clearance opens views and access, if more litter picking makes the green even greener, again Heath Hands - who come from all over London - can all take a bow.

Launched back in June as a 'good idea' by the Suburb's neighbouring Vale of Health Society, Heath Hands is supported by the Heath's managers, the Corporation of London, and is an open membership organisation for everyone from the age of 16. By the end of 1999, the organisation boasted more than 100 members, had held two introductory sessions, 26 three-hour work sessions on the Heath and collectively contributed nearly 700 hours to their labour of love.

The upshot is that in the four months since actually starting work on the Heath, Heath Hands has made a difference and looks set to attract many more Heath enthusiasts who would enjoy getting down to gardening writ large, working with seasoned Heath staff and fellow volunteers. The programme is settling down into enjoyable project sessions, whether volunteers choose work on the Heath itself or help behind the scenes.

Volunteers can opt to work as little as one three-hour session six times a year or as much as six hours a week. At press time, sessions are held on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, but as the corps grows, sessions on other days of the week will be added.

Operation Benchmark (a survey of all memorial benches on the Heath) is now under way with a team of four. It will provide

the first complete record of the benches on the Heath, their inscriptions and their condition. From this information, a maintenance scheme can be organised. The bench census will fill the information gap by providing a computer database of all information on the benches, available for both Corporation use and by the members of the public who may wish to locate a particular bench or inscription.

The first major project on the ground was the planting of 2,000 heather plants on the western slope of the Vale of Health. For all work on the Heath, the Corporation itself supplies training, supervision, equipment and protective clothing as necessary. Heath staff members themselves also work along with the volunteers.

In addition to individuals, Heath Hands hope to attract groups who enjoy working together, whether schools, local businesses, neighbourhood or even family groups. And they can be working on everything from planting and weeding to renovating benches or clearing litter. But there is plenty of room for volunteers who want to give something to the Heath in the way of special skills in public relations, computing and administrative work. After all, someone has to keep track of who's doing what and when.

Would you like to know more? Leaflets are available from the Hampstead Heath Information Centre at Parliament Hill (020 7482 7073) or from the steering committee chair at Greenmoor, Vale of Health, London NW3 1AZ (020 7794 6772).

BOBBY DE JOIA
Bobby de Joia is the founder chair of the Heath Hands Steering Committee and chairs the Vale of Health Society.

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